

## **Annual Report for Smith-Lever Funded Projects**

**Project Title:** Improving Field Crop Extension outreach through Enhanced Growing Season

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**Project Start:** 1/1/2008

**Project Term:** 12/31/2010

**Report Fiscal Year:** 2010

### **Project Summary/Abstract:**

Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) educators are Cornell University's front line in helping New York field crop producer clientele with crop production and pest management issues. Keeping CCE personnel informed on the latest information and developments helps us meet Cornell's high standards for extension outreach and provides clientele with quality, pertinent, timely and user-friendly programs and resources that maximize our educational impacts. Enhancing communication opportunities between CCE county and campus personnel helps strengthen the outreach network, and is an important component of CCE's professional development. A series of twenty-one conference calls were held weekly to improve campus and field staff communication regarding field crop pest and crop management issues during the growing season. Each call averaged approximately 10 participants and lasted forty-five minutes.

### **Project Summary & Impact:**

2010 marked the final year of this 3 year Cornell Cooperative Extension "Directors Call" funded project. As in previous years, this season's meetings were held weekly during the growing season with an alternate week schedule after October 1<sup>st</sup>. Conference calls averaged 10 participants and 48 minutes per call. A series of twenty-one conference calls, were conducted during 2010 from April 30 – Oct. 1 (8:30 - 9:15 am). These conference calls enabled CCE field crop personnel and faculty to share information updates on statewide observations of crop growth / development, pest status and selected pest management and other topics. A session to update field staff on Western Bean Cutworm, a new pest, utilized the Adobe Connect and was well received.

The objective of this effort was to improve the timely statewide communication of pest and crop production management issues among field crop CCE personnel during the growing season.

Over the three seasons of field crop conference calls, CCE personnel with field crop responsibilities contributed to the weekly opportunity to share observations, gain insights, acquire and present practical knowledge and technical information in an in-house professional development environment. These timely efforts enhanced communication by field crop extension personnel (educators and faculty) and the collective awareness on current pest and crop conditions. In addition, the timely forum allowed for discussion of anticipated pest, crop and weather issues, integrated pest and crop management and potential extension programming opportunities. The majority of those involved participated each of the three years with new extension field staff joining in the discussions with more experienced field staff.

CCE personnel involvement over the 2010 season was typical of that seen during the three years of this project. 2010 conference calls averaged 10 participants per conference call

with active participation and contributions by Gary Bergstrom (Cornell plant pathologist) and Russ Hahn (Cornell weed scientist). The entire CCE Field Crop In House listserve was invited to join; 19 different CCE educators participated this past season.

Meetings were moderated by project directors: Waldron and Hahn. Meeting activities and agenda included: roll call and introductions, weekly weather summary and outlook (J. Rennels / A. DeGaetano, NOAA NE Climate Center at Cornell), discussion of county pest observations (contributions by all CCE participants). Topics included: statewide updates on crop growth and development, pest status and other selected pest management topics. Meetings concluded with a special topic and/or suggested IPM activities for the week. Post meeting activities included a summary of weather outlook and field observations for inclusion in the Weekly Field Crop IPM Pest Report available to field crop extension personnel via a Cornell field crops list serve and to the general public via the NYS IPM Program website (<http://nysipm.cornell.edu/fieldcrops>). Links and supplemental information discussed during the conference call were shared with CCE participants via follow up email.

Topics during the 2010 season included: warmer than normal weather conditions (~2 weeks) contribute to earlier than historically expected pest occurrence and crop development. Major topics and activities: tracking wheat growth / development / disease incidence, stripe rust in wheat (first occurrence), early season weed control, very low incidence of alfalfa weevil, PLH, and soybean aphid; identification and management of white mold in soybean, slugs in corn & soybeans, crow damage to emerging corn. Detailed discussions of fusarium head blight prediction model, mid to late season corn weed management, western bean cutworm monitoring risk to sweet and field corn / dry bean, soybean white mold management, weed management recommendations and decision making, vertebrate damage to field crops, sharing of timely resources and field monitoring reminders. Weekly weather outlook and pest observations were summarized in the Field Crop IPM Weekly Pest Report (<http://nysipm.cornell.edu/fieldcrops/tag/pestrpt/>). The intended audience for this newsletter includes CCE personnel, crop advisors, agricultural industry, farmer. Direct and multiplier effect distribution estimated at 14,000.

Participants were regularly polled during the season for feedback regarding the conference call. An end of season questionnaire was shared each year. Responses were very positive emphasizing the value of timely updates, discussion, professional development and team building. Survey questionnaire and 2010 evaluation responses are provided at the end of this report.

Over it's three year duration, a total of 25 CCE individuals participated and contributed to the effort and it's success. Participants found value in the timely updates, discussion, professional development and team building aspects of the conference calls that could then be used to increase potential extension outreach impacts with stakeholders.

The primary benefit and potential impact of the conference call program lies in enhanced communication and professional development of the extension personnel involved. Stakeholders ultimately benefit from this effort through the potential enhanced extension outreach impacts related to increased timely awareness of pest issues, pre-emptive monitoring and management of potential pest problems that help grower stakeholders

minimize or avoid pest impacts, better address pesticide use decisions, and protect net profitability.

**Plans for 2011:** A grant to obtain federal formula funding has been proposed to continue the conference call series and is pending. The 2011 effort would strive to increase the number of participants, incorporate more use of Adobe Connect collaboration software for training purposes and presentations by subject matter specialists.

### **2010 NYS IPM Field Crop Weekly Conference Call End of Season Survey**

1. The 2010 NYS IPM Field Crop Weekly Conference Call series was:

Very Useful   X        Somewhat Useful           Not Useful     

2. What did you like the most about the NYS Field Crop Weekly Conference Call?

- I appreciate being able to get guidance from others with more experience working in Field Crops
- Pest and crop updates, I like the Adobe connect presentations

3. What did you like the least about the NYS Field Crop Weekly Conference Call?

- Not getting on any calls this year. (The year has flown by.) As a part-time person and general ag educator, feeling unprepared for the call when I haven't made any field crops visits the week prior to the call.
- It is just difficult to make all of the calls with other job obligations

4. Was 8:30 - 9:15 am Thursday a convenient meeting time? Comments/Suggestions?

- A good time to meet – any day or time would have occasional conflicts

5. We are interested in your assessment of the following components of the Conference Call. (Rating 5 = very useful, 3 = somewhat useful, 1 = not useful)

Weather Outlook:   3  

CCE County Update:   3  

Featured Pest topic(s):   5  

Power point presentation:   5  

Links - (follow up email):   3  

6. Our three years of funding for the Field Crop Pest Management Conference call ends this year. Should we explore opportunities to continue this effort next season?     

- Yes

7. If outside funding was not available to pay for the overall conference call expenses would you be willing/able to pay for your personal access to the call?     

- Yes

8. If we continue the conference call series next year, do you have any specific comments or suggestions to improve next season's **NYS IPM Field Crop Weekly Conference Call** series to better suit your field crop IPM extension needs and those of your clientele?

- I believe the Adobe connect is a great way to learn about topics – maybe once a month have a topic.

9. Additional Comments regarding the Conference Calls?

10. **Winter Meeting** suggestions for Field Crop and / or Livestock IPM topics?

11. Under consideration... Would you or your stakeholders have interest in on-line (web based) overviews on various field crop IPM topics - such as those we have provided for IPM scout training and the Dairy Fly IPM Teleconference. For example: an overview of alfalfa IPM approaches to common insect, disease and weed issues? ID, monitoring, thresholds etc. Perhaps for DEC credit?

- Sounds like a great idea